



Bowral



Mittagong



Berrima



Moss Vale

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,
Southern Highlands of NSW

ABN 29 362 616 937

NEWSLETTER

No 552 September 2022



From the President's Desk

The guest speaker at our last General Meeting, Kerry Ross, who is Museum Coordinator for the Goulburn Mulwaree Council, gave an enthusiastic presentation of all the museums and memorials in Goulburn. It was a most fascinating presentation which highlighted the history of our near neighbour. The day was bitterly cold and possibly contributed to a smaller than usual attendance.

As the Queen's Memorial Public Holiday has been set for Thursday 22 September, please be aware that our monthly meeting scheduled for that day has now been cancelled. The speaker, Alex Beben from Austral Archaeology, has been rescheduled to our meeting on 27 October. He will talk about the archaeological dig at Bong Bong Common, our first convict settlement. With warmer weather approaching we are hopeful that members will venture out to enjoy our guest speakers and the wonderful afternoon tea provided by our volunteers. Alex's profile can be read on page 3.

Similarly, with warmer weather approaching we have planned an outing to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre at The Oaks on Sunday 9 October. This is a very interesting place to visit and will also incorporate a visit to the Burrangong lookout. The cost is a very reasonable \$15 per person which covers entry to the

Centre and morning tea. Car-pooling will be required as hired transport is too expensive. If you are interested in going please register at the Archives.

On pages 4 and 5 you will find our continuing series about the memorials dedicated to three Moss Vale doctors. The third of these, the Alcorn Memorial Clock, was built to commemorate Dr John Alcorn and erected in 1938 in the centre of Moss Vale. The article also provides a brief history of the Queen Victoria Fountain which is an integral part of the clock history.

Mount Gibraltar is a most iconic landform situated between Bowral and Mittagong, providing panoramic views. The Mount Gibraltar Landcare & Bushcare Group have for years maintained "The Gib" in pristine condition for all to enjoy. For anyone aspiring to a panoramic morning walk there is nothing to rival the "Rim Walk" which traverses the rim of The Gib close to the cliff edge. On the Mittagong Lookout side can be seen a trachyte retaining wall that was constructed during the 1930s Depression from stone obtained from the nearby quarry. More on this interesting project can be read on pages 6 and 7.

The Australian Antiques Roadshow will be at Mittagong RSL Club on Sunday 16 October beginning at 10:30 am. Our Society will have a table at this show distributing information and selling our books.

Ian Mackey

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2022

SEPTEMBER 2022: Thursday 22 September at 2:00pm

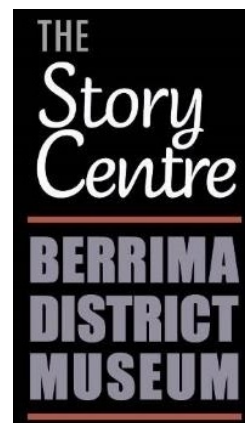
NOTE: No meeting due to the Memorial Holiday for the Queen

OCTOBER 2022: Thursday 27 October at 2:00pm

SPEAKER: Alex Beben, Archaeologist, about the dig at Bong Bong Common

AFTERNOON TEA is served following the speaker

The **Family History Interest Group** meets at the Mittagong Archives on the first Wednesday each month, at 1pm



Moore Memorable Musings



SMART ARTS

'What's the Matter With Kids Today?' goes the song title.

They may be smarter than the kids of 50 years ago, but I fear the

constant bombardment of information into their little undeveloped brains seems to have altered their behaviour somewhat.

There is evidence that our brains haven't changed much in 40,000 yrs. I'm told if anything, they've become slightly smaller.

Neanderthals had a much bigger brain than ours. Just think what they could have done with a computer and today's technology!

They could have ordered a Woolies Mammoth take-away from the comfort of their centrally-heated cave to save them time doing all that hunting, fishing and gathering.

Sadly, I learn that pre-schoolers now have the attention span of a goldfish!

These children grow up with a device attached to them, like another limb. Conversations with their parents are monosyllabic and border on the moronic.

"Yep" "Nope" "Like" "Nah" "Cool" are some favourite mutterings.

The old art of conversation is wasted trying to talk to some robotic students.

Despite this criticism, it's true, we've all become a bunch of smart-Alecs.

We now own smart devices, drive smart cars, open smart fridges, we set smart goals, use smart irons, we can also sit on smart toilets. The Government now offers us Smart Travel plans.

We are so smart we can pull out our iPhone at a dinner party to check the height of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the lifespan of a lobster or even check your solar panel output on your roof. *Aren't we so smart!!?*

One of our family is so *super-smart*. He put his photo on Instagram, met a girl on Tinder, became more friendly on Facebook, and had long chats on WhatsApp. He proposed on Zoom, staying in touch by Viber.

Wedding invitations were bought from Amazon and sent out by email. A baby was conceived by IVF, covered by Medicare & AHM and paid for through PayPal.

Bruce Moore

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

That time again!!

Renewals are due from 1 October.

A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. We are happy to receive payment by cash, cheque or money order, OR funds can be deposited to our bank account, details of which are shown on the Renewal Form.

NOTE: If depositing funds to our bank account, please ensure that your initial and surname are used as reference and **PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED RENEWAL FORM AND BANK RECEIPT BY MAIL OR EMAIL**, as this helps the Membership Secretary to keep track of the many payments.

Notification of Historical Event

For those members with an interest in the history of the Avoca district, we advise that Avoca Public School is holding its 150 Year celebration at the school on Saturday 15 October, 10am to 3pm, with coffee, live music, stalls, games and BBQ. Located via Moss Vale at 961 Sheepwash Rd, Avoca.



Trachyte retaining wall being built on Mt Gibraltar's north side in 1937 by the Harvey Brothers (Jim at left and Bill). Photo: Paul Harvey. Story on pages 6-7.

BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

The Story Centre

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St, Berrima

OPEN: FRIDAY to SUNDAY

10.00am to 3.00pm

throughout the year including school and public holiday periods.

Groups welcome at other times by arrangement. Ph John 0434 623 402

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or email bdmuseum@bigpond.com

National Trust Exhibition

No Time To Spare, Southern Highlands highlights some at-risk heritage of the Highlands. A collection of 22 images of the area has been created by local Southern Highlands photographers.

In 1961 the National Trust staged "*No Time To Spare*" an exhibition of b&w photographs by the renowned Max Dupain, featuring 34 buildings worthy of preservation.

In 2021, a second exhibition was staged with 22 photos by several photographers included. Now, 22 images from the Highlands have been added to the collection. View at:

Studios 1 and 2, Bowral Art Gallery
1 Short Street, Bowral

24 September to 6 October 2022

Opening hours: 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Our October meeting speaker

Alexander Beben

Director at Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, the firm undertaking archaeological investigations at Bong Bong Common for Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Founded in 1987, Austral Archaeology is now one of Australia's leading heritage consultancies. It provides expert and professional consultancy advice to public and private sectors in the fields of archaeology, heritage conservation and heritage management.



Alex has over 17 years' experience in archaeological projects and has conducted over 500 heritage projects across Australia and internationally in the UK and Italy. As a resident of the Southern Highlands, he has been fortunate to spend much of his career working in the Illawarra, South Coast and Southern Highlands areas. He is managing the Bong Bong Common archaeological investigation project that was commissioned by Wingecarribee Shire Council in 2021 and is still on-going.

Bong Bong Common is described on the WSC website as being the site of a convict period settlement that dates from 1821 to c1843, consisting predominantly of government buildings where soldiers and public servants would have worked and lived. This is the first European settlement of the area which was progressively abandoned from 1837 in favour of the new settlement at Berrima, with only two buildings remaining in 1843.

The Shire Council's main purpose for commissioning the project is to determine the location and line of buildings and determine what risk there is that proposed works will have an impact on the items of heritage significance.

At our meeting, Alex will give an illustrated talk about what they have discovered at the site, how this relates to its historical significance and perhaps reveal some new information. Please come along.

Please note: our general meeting on 22 September has been cancelled due to the Memorial Holiday

Our tour to Wollondilly on 9 October

Having heard numerous reports that the Wollondilly Heritage Centre at The Oaks is really worth a visit, in June the BDHS Committee advised of a proposed bus tour to the Heritage Centre and Burragorang lookout.

As the cost of hiring a bus and driver has since proved to be prohibitive, instead we intend to car-pool with a limited number of vehicles on Sunday 9 October. Cost is \$15 per head for entry fees and morning tea.

We will assemble from 8:30am in the Playhouse car park at our Mittagong archives for a 9:00 departure.

First stop will be the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum where we will be provided with a guided tour, talk, delicious morning tea of scones, jam and cream, and then have time to inspect the exhibitions.

After that we will drive the short distance (15 mins) to the lookout and picnic area in the Burragorang State Conservation Area to take in the stunning views of Warragamba Dam while enjoying a late lunch. A reminder that you will need to bring your own lunch.

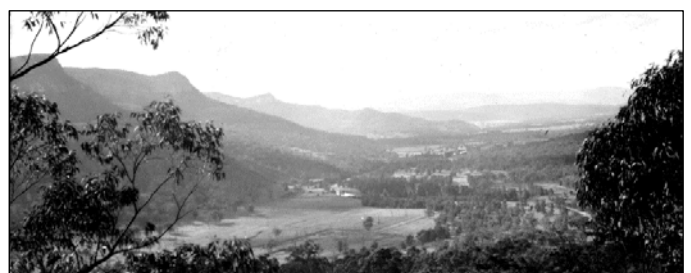
If you wish to attend, please email or phone the archives on 4872 2169 to have your name added to the booking sheet, even if you have already indicated your interest in participating. We ask that you also indicate whether you would rather be a passenger or drive your own car and, if so, whether you have room to take extra passengers.

The Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum was built by volunteers from The Oaks Historical Society, on land donated by



Wollondilly Shire Council. It is a repository for archives, records and objects relating to the early development of villages in that Shire, with the exhibitions on display incorporating the objects and including stories of the early pioneers.

The lookout is a viewing point for nature's beauty, looking across to the body of water far below that today provides about 80% of Sydney's water supply



Burragorang Valley in the 1930s

The third of local doctors' memorials

In our July issue we provided some information about a grandfather clock recently donated to the BDHS. It had been presented in 1954 to Dr Allen Wise by the citizens of Moss Vale. It is now located in the foyer outside our upstairs meeting room at the Mittagong Archives/Research Centre as a public memorial.

Two other doctors of the same practice, Dr Alcorn and Dr Gurney, also have public memorials dedicated to them. Provided in last month's issue was a history of Dr Guy Gurney's memorial entrance pillars at the Bundanoon Gullies Reserve. To complete the series, Linda Emery's history of Dr Alcorn and the Memorial Clock built in his honour is this month's feature.

Firstly though, a brief history of the **Moss Vale Queen Victoria Fountain** is provided to give some context, as the memorial clock was built over the fountain.

To mark the Diamond Jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria in 1897, Moss Vale residents commemorated the occasion with a drinking fountain, built where Bay and Argyle Streets met out front of



the Post Office, roughly halfway between the then railway station entrance at the far end of Bay St and the Royal Hotel across Argyle St.

The unveiling was performed by Mrs Violet Bennett, a prominent resident, on 22 June 1897. The coverage in *The Scrutineer* stated that the fountain provided drinking water with steel cups attached by chains to four taps and was described as being built on a solid concrete base with trachyte kerbing.

From a large stone bowl, 5ft wide and 18in deep, arose a polished red granite base with a column about 3ft high of polished trachyte, finished with a rough red granite cap. The stonework was surmounted by an iron standard with three electric lights, the wires being underground. The contractors for the fountain's erection were Loveridge & Hudson.

When Moss Vale station was enlarged for duplication of the line in 1915, Bay St became just a turning bay (and taxi rank), with the fountain serving as a partial barrier dividing the turning bay from Argyle St.

Dr John Macquarie Alcorn

Linda Emery

The Alcorn Memorial Clock in Moss Vale has been an icon in the town centre since it was erected in 1938, built in honour of Dr John Macquarie Alcorn, a much-admired general practitioner in the town for 16 years.



John Macquarie Alcorn was born at West Maitland in 1881 to parents Robert George and Mary Macquarie. Both his Irish-born father Robert and uncle, Robert's brother Samuel, were doctors in Maitland, practicing there for many years from the 1880s.

John's early education was in Maitland, then at TAS, The Armidale School, before sailing in 1900 for Ireland where he graduated in medicine from the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin in 1905. His brother Robert also studied medicine in Dublin, so it was certainly a family tradition.

After returning to Australia, he worked in general practice in Maitland, probably with his father, and later in Forbes. In 1912, he married in Sydney to Emily Erratt of Walcha and in 1915 enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps. He served throughout the war, first in the Liverpool Army Camp for eight months, then on hospital ships and in field hospitals in France. He returned to Australia in January 1919 holding the rank of Major.

After the war he settled in Moss Vale where he joined Dr Frederick Stevenson in his practice. He was active in the Returned Services movement and served as President of Moss Vale Sub-branch of the Returned Services League for four years.

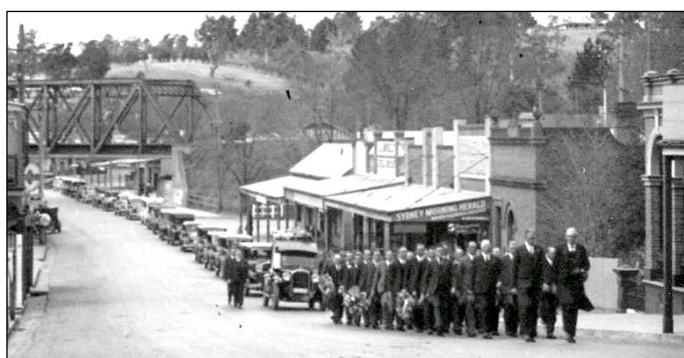
He was also a prominent member of Moss Vale Golf Club, the School of Arts, the Show Society and was the driving force behind formation of the Southern Highlands Publicity Association. The Association was formed in March 1935, an early version of Tourism Southern Highlands, to promote the whole area but it was initiated by Moss Vale Sub-branch of the RSL hence Dr Alcorn's involvement.

Dr Alcorn was held in high esteem by the Moss Vale community, both as a medical man and for his dedication to local affairs. His death in September 1936 at the age of 55 came as a great shock.

He was asthmatic which was no doubt exacerbated by exposure to gas during his war service.

Death brought grief to many homes in Moss Vale and the Berrima District when on Friday last it struck down that great-hearted citizen, Dr John Macquarie Alcorn. The genial doctor was everybody's friend and the number of tear-dimmed eyes seen at the great memorial service in St John's testified to the sincerity of the grief of persons in all stations of life. The congregation was drawn from all parts of the district, from all creeds and from all classes. Seldom has such widespread respect been shown to a departed citizen, however distinguished.

Returned soldiers from all over the district took part in his funeral to show their respect to a comrade who they said had never spared himself in their service.



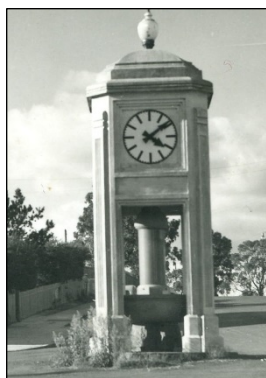
It was not long before a movement began to erect a public memorial to Dr Alcorn. A month after his death the first meeting was called by the Moss Vale diggers. It was chaired by Sir Norman Kater (also a doctor) who had served with Dr Alcorn in France. Sir Norman described him as "the bravest man he ever knew and in his work among his fallen and injured comrades, exposed himself to all kinds of danger".

The Dr Alcorn Memorial Fund was established which raised money by public subscription and in 1937, the decision was taken to erect a clock tower over the existing Queen Victoria Fountain.

Bowral architect Harry Sheaffe, the designer of the Bowral War Memorial, was the honorary architect. Mittagong builder Sid McFarlane was the successful tenderer to build the memorial.

The unveiling ceremony on 6 February 1938 was a huge occasion with between 1500 and 2000 people attending, including returned soldiers, the military, massed bands, boy scouts and other groups.

The memorial was unveiled by the State President of the RSL, Leonard Robb.



The Shire President Councillor Tom Mack promised on the day that the memorial "would ever be preserved" and so it remains, almost 85 years on, a prominent public memorial to an esteemed Moss Vale identity.



Unveiling of the Alcorn Memorial Clock, 6 February 1938

Subsequent modifications at the site

The Alcorn Memorial Clock, erected over the Queen Victoria Fountain, has long endured, as Linda Emery states above, but problems did arise.

From 1938 the growth of Moss Vale brought an ever-increasing flow of traffic along Argyle St with some motorists encountering difficulties at the Memorial, especially those who used the bay as a roundabout, for the fountain obscured the view under the clock.

Prominent local resident Haille Paine suggested in the 1970s that Council consider relocating the fountain. In his opinion, the superimposing of the clock "partially concealed the fountain which was a thing of beauty and symmetry and a fine example of the stonemason's craft, and established an incongruity of design and materials between the fountain and the clock tower".

In 1978 Council removed the fountain, extended the traffic island around the clock tower (see photo on previous page) and had repairs made to the clock, which had been failing to keep on time.

The fountain was moved to the rear of the taxi rank in the grassed area that had been Bay St. Neglected, it no longer had its wrought iron light fitting nor did it function as a drinking fountain.

In 2007 Wingecarribee Shire Council commissioned landscape architects Chris and Charlotte Webb to undertake the Leighton Gardens extension project. As part of this project, the fountain was restored, its top lights reinstated, and it was then repositioned into Diamond Jubilee Park where a circular landscaped garden with seats provided a suitable setting.

The Alcorn Memorial Clock was also given a face-lift.

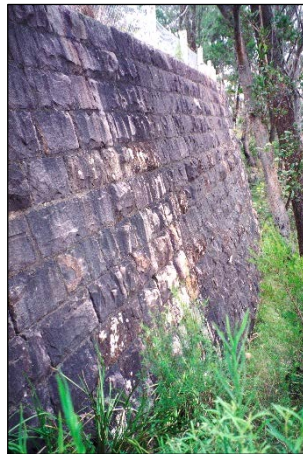
Upgrade works on The Gib in 1930s

Dominating the landscape between Mittagong and Bowral, Mount Gibraltar ('The Gib') is a landmark of special significance, its Reserve listed on the State Heritage Register for both its Endangered Ecological Communities and for the Heritage Quarries Complex.

In 2007 the Mount Gibraltar Landcare & Bushcare Group published "The Gib", a book of beauty and fine detail documenting the site's natural and cultural heritage, and the Group has now worked for 30 years with Wingecarribee Shire Council to protect the site.

At the summit is a recreation reserve, including picnic areas and a lookout to the south across Bowral. From there a walking track winds northward, leading to the Mount Jellore and Mittagong lookouts. The views from all lookouts are spectacular.

Providing vehicular access to the northern lookouts is a short scenic Loop Road that is supported in part by a large retaining wall near the Jellore lookout and a smaller one at Mittagong lookout. The walking track passes along the base of the walls, providing a fine view of their structure, not so easily visible from the road level above.



When Mt Gibraltar Group published their book in 2007, little was known about how these northern lookouts and retaining wall came about.

In 2009, Jane Lemann, one of the authors of the book (and currently Acting Secretary of the Mt Gibraltar Group) gained some details the wall's history from a conversation at Picton with Cliff Harvey. He was a son of James (Jim) Harvey who, with his brother Bill, took on stonemason work as the Harvey Brothers. They were employed in 1937 by the NSW Government Public Works Department to construct a trachyte wall underpinning the new Loop Road on Mt Gibraltar.

Cliff provided Jane with poor-quality images of the wall being constructed and some family recollections, including that the Harvey Brothers were assisted by relief workers. They lived on site, sleeping in a tent and using a hut with a fireplace and galley close to what is now the Mittagong lookout.

The huge stones were blasted from rock up on The Gib, then conveyed on a large fork log sledge drawn by a horse. The rocks were then cut and dressed,

placed into position by the Harvey Brothers with the help of the relief worker lads. Jim is remembered as saying that some stone was also brought in from Bullio (possibly for the shelters or Jellore Lookout).

Prior to that, one of the Harvey Brothers earlier projects was building the sandstone railway bridge over Eddy Avenue at Belmore Park, Central Railway. Jim Harvey, born in 1900, had worked as a young man digging the trenches for the sewage mains in Sydney. He had seven children. He retired to Balmoral near Hill Top in the 1940s, working as a charcoal burner, orchardist and raising poultry. He passed away, aged 55, in 1956.

In July this year Jane received an email from Paul Harvey, a son of Cliff Harvey and thus Jim's grandson, who was interested to learn more about the Harvey Brothers. Jane provided him with information about The Gib and the details she had learned from his father Cliff (who passed away in 2017), and Paul was able to supply better quality scans of the original photos of the wall being constructed.



Constructed by HARVEY BROS.



Constructed by HARVEY BROS.

A search on Trove for the history of the lookouts, the scenic Loop Road and retaining wall, resulted in a story taking shape from articles in *The Southern Mail*.

A summary follows here. At the time, the district consisted of small councils, either municipal or shire, that were based in Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale.

Bowral Municipal Council was informed by its mayor, Alderman Venables, in November 1936, that, for Depression Relief, the State Government proposed extending Oxley Drive up and around the southeast side of Mount Gibraltar all the way to the summit.

In January 1937, Mr Mark Morton, MLA, wrote to Bowral Council, informing that the Minister for Local Government, Mr Spooner, had visited The Gib and was favourably impressed with the suggestion that its development should be declared a national work and be financed by the Government.

Morton followed this with a further letter in March: "It is proposed by the Government to develop Mount Gibraltar as a recreation reserve, and a considerable amount of money will be spent by the Department in making better access to this reserve. The locality is now being surveyed preparatory to the work being put in hand as a means of absorbing surplus former Emergency Relief workers from adjoining shires, and it is hoped that the work will commence by the end of this present month . . . the amount of money to be spent will be entirely out of Government funds entailing no expense to your Council, but it is improbable that any of your own unemployed will be utilised for this work."

At the time, local unemployed were not allowed to work on their own area's projects. For some reason these Government projects had a policy to use men from elsewhere, eg. a Bega project used Wollongong men! This seems to have created tensions locally.

In July 1937, Minister Spooner, Mayor Venables and Mr Morton MLA inspected the construction work on The Gib of the road extension, that had been deemed to be of National Importance, and agreed to improve the poor conditions of the work camps.

Spooner visited again in September 1937 and recommended beautification works. A scheme was drawn up to include lookouts, protective barriers, picnic shelters, tracks, signs, kiosk, band rotunda and, at Spooner's recommendation, including lookouts to the north accessed by a new stretch of scenic road.

In December 1937 *The Southern Mail* ran an end of year report by Mayor Venables, in which he stated that: "A road was constructed to the Gib Reserve, and Mr Spooner had later driven up it to see a view which he considered unparalleled in the State. As a consequence, the [new] scenic road was being constructed which would attract visitors from all parts of the State".

From this report Jane Lemann gleans that Oxley Road was extended through Quarry A and over the top to Mittagong in an initial Depression Emergency Relief project and when Minister Spooner inspected the work, he was so impressed by the view to the North that the new lookouts and extension of the scenic loop road were suggested and the money found to employ the Harvey Brothers.

Construction of the loop road and wall commenced in July 1937 and was completed by May 1939. There was no grand opening because World War II was raging at the time.

Jane describes the retaining wall as really spectacular and so beautifully made that it has not moved an inch in spite of earthquakes,



torrential rains, fires, and snow. Trachyte is a very hard and dense stone, strong and fine grained so it polishes beautifully as well.

The Southern Mail published numerous articles about the upgrades to The Gib in 1939, including the two below that appeared in May:

Views of Surpassing Beauty. The work of constructing a permanent road to the Gib has been completed and the tourist may now see one of the most impressive and beautiful landscapes in the State without leaving his car. For those who like walking, the spot is full of interest and picnickers will find it ideal for their purpose. Workmen are now employed making shelter sheds and lavatories at suitable places. These are being constructed of the local stone and blend harmoniously with their surroundings. Concrete tanks for the storage of water will be provided, so that next summer The Gib should be one of the most popular picnicking grounds in the Commonwealth.

Indescribable. Letter to the Editor: "One of the most beautiful scenes I have ever observed was presented from The Gib on Sunday morning. Dense fog enveloped Bowral and filled the adjoining valleys. Taking a car to the top of the Gib, now accessible by a perfect road, I found the sun shining brightly over the fog-filled valleys, transforming the fog into fleecy wisps of snow-white beauty. Moss Vale and Bowral were invisible and for miles and miles one saw only a sea of fairy filmy whiteness."

Compiled by Philip Morton with thanks to Jane Lemann and Paul Harvey for research material and photos.

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 ☎ Telephone (02) 4872 2169

email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com ☎ web: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au

- ARCHIVES:** Cnr Old Hume Highway and Bowral Road, MITTAGONG.
OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays.
Library collection contains reference books, journals and a general collection.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com
AT PRESENT, OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Fridays to Sundays.
This includes during school and public holiday periods.
- MEMBERSHIP:** Any person wanting to join the Society may do so at any stage during the year by completing a form and paying the appropriate fee. Joining Fee \$10.00 – Single \$25.00 – Family \$35.00.
- AFFILIATIONS:** Royal Australian Historical Society, Museums Australia Inc and NSW Association of Family History Societies.

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